

SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE – RESPONSE OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Page 11 – The need for more good school places - Families who are just about managing

Q: *How can we better understand the impact of policy on a wider cohort of pupils whose life chances are profoundly affected by school but who may not qualify or apply for free school meals?*

Key points for response:

A better way to understand the impact of the policy would be to ask if there is a process to identify families that have had no previous generations attending university and if we could target these families who also have talented and gifted children with the ability to access Higher Education?

Q: *How can we identify them?*

Key points for response:

At the start of any admissions application process there has to be valid eligibility criteria that parents will willingly provide such as tax credits, housing benefits and then show a combined income below £30,000. If there is a potential student debt considerably in excess of the annual family's income it makes the decision to attend university somewhat harder to make even if the benefits are clearly evidenced and documented.

Page 15 – Independent Schools - Proposals for reform

Q: *What contribution could the biggest and most successful independent schools make to the state school system?*

Key points for response:

It is easy to generalize but it is generally accepted that most pupils attending independent schools come from stable, secure and relatively wealthy backgrounds and more pertinently have had family descendants also attending independent schools. That heritage and tradition is a vital part of the school culture and enables a sense of place and belonging to enable students to feel comfortable which allows them to maximize their potential and develop their self-confidence and resilience. It would provide inspiration and an aspiration to achieve. If an independent school can translate this to the state sector it would break down barriers and assist in removing myths about higher education (too costly, too much debt, etc.).

Q: *Are there other ways in which independent schools can support more good school places and help children of all backgrounds to succeed?*

Key points for response:

There has to be more consideration given to provision for pupils with

- Learning difficulties and /or disabilities
- Sensory impairment – hearing and visual
- Mental health issues
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All schools including those in the independent sector must share the challenge and support for vulnerable learners.

Q: *Are these the right expectations to apply to all independent schools to ensure they do more to improve state education locally?*

Key points for response:

There has to be proper collaborative working between all local schools in a given area to maximise funds and expectations for the community and for all pupils; it has to be inclusive and share resources and facilities including sport. Only where independent schools can demonstrate capacity and a successful track record to support others will state schools be willing to work in partnership.

Page 16 – Independent Schools - Proposals for reform

Q: *What threshold should we apply to capture those independent schools who have the capacity to sponsor or set up a new school or offer funded places, and to exempt those that do not?*

Key points for response:

Similar criteria to academies wishing to sponsor others for example;

- A strong financial probity including a substantial financial turnover (in excess of £5million?)
- Ability to manage large numbers of staff
- Experienced Headteacher of at least five years who is able to demonstrate quality leadership
- Improvements in all Key Stage results and progression destinations.
- A successful history of supporting or working in partnership with other schools from another sector

Q: *Is setting benchmarks the right way to implement these requirements?*

Key points for response:

No because it implies coercion. There has to be a common moral purpose with a coherent understanding behind the reasons for working alongside or with the independent sector. If one party feels forced it will undermine relationships and the outcomes will under-perform.

Q: *Should we consider legislation to allow the Charity Commission to revise its guidance, and to remove the benefits associated with charitable status from those independent schools which do not comply?*

Key points for response:

If we risk de-stabilising the independent sector it will not incentivise their involvement; there has to be a benefit to both parties.

Q: *Are any other changes necessary to secure the Government's objectives?*

Key points for response:

- Same inspection frameworks for independent schools, academies and maintained schools

Page 19 – Universities - Proposals for reform

Q: *How can the academic expertise of universities be brought to bear on our schools system, to improve school-level attainment and in doing so widen access?*

Key points for response:

- Helping to develop the curriculum in specialist subjects
- Providing better research evidence driven teaching methods to improve attainment and aspiration
- Providing inspiration to attend university
- Sharing expertise

Q: *Are there other ways in which universities could be asked to contribute to raising school-level attainment?*

Key points for response:

Sponsor a school with poor Ofsted grades, or known poor performance.

Q: *Is the Director for Access (DfA) guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?*

Key points for response:

The DfA rarely uses any sanctions although universities should be encouraged to work in partnership with local schools who have a high proportion of FSM / pupil premium learners who are expected or have the ability to attend any University for any subject.

Page 20 – Universities - Proposals for reform

Q: *What is the best way to ensure that all universities sponsor schools as a condition of higher fees?*

Key points for response:

Introducing new legislation for Universities that requires them to sponsor a local school would certainly be beneficial in encouraging a partnership arrangement for strengthening routes into higher education. The sanction of higher fees is not appropriate; there has to be a moral obligation to assist.

Q: *Should we encourage universities to take specific factors into account when deciding how and where to support school attainment?*

Key points for response:

Yes. Encouraging senior leaders of universities to become members of a school governing body would be a positive step in developing productive relationships on behalf of all learners. Universities are vital partners in supporting a deliverable pathway into higher education or employment from school. There is always a danger that the best universities develop close links with the best schools and disparities of achievement polarise as a consequence.

Page 25 – Selective Schools – Proposals to reform

Q: *How should we best support existing grammars to expand?*

Key points for response:

In Leicestershire 86% of 280 schools are good or outstanding which implies that the case for more grammar schools is not proven. However if there is an expansion of grammar schools then their admissions process should prioritise learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Q: *What can we do to support the creation of either wholly or partially new selective schools?*

Key points for response:

There has to be consideration for supported learners such as SEN and in particular those with behavioural difficulties. Wholly selective schools should only be established where there are sufficient opportunities and they must be properly funded.

Q: *How can we support existing non-selective schools to become selective?*

Key points for response:

They must demonstrate a coherent curriculum or education offer that meets the needs of a locality and show the benefit of all learners rather than a narrow few. The funding needs to consider how schools can be assisted with

- Uniform costs
- Transport costs
- Music / sport costs

particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There has to be due diligence of all proposals to avoid what has happened to many studio schools and University Technology Colleges.

Page 26 – Selective Schools - Proposals to reform

Q: *Are these the right conditions to ensure that selective schools improve*

the quality of non-selective places?

Key points for response:

Yes but:

- where is the appeals process for individual decisions?
- will you lose grammar school status if you fail an Ofsted inspection?
- Will legislation show how you can lose selective status?

Q: *Are there other conditions that we should consider as requirements for new or expanding selective schools, and existing non-selective schools becoming selective?*

Key points for response:

Further consideration should be given to

- Transport costs
- Uniform costs
- SEN
- Permanent Exclusion
- Behaviour difficulties

In addition all schools should develop a strategic dialogue with the local authority to embed their connection with the local community.

Q: *What is the right proportion of children from lower income households for new selective schools to admit?*

Key points for response:

Set it as high as possible – preferably as a minimum 13% - evidence states that it varies from 1% to 50% nationally – most selective schools are lower than 10% and the average is 3% compared to the rest of the school sector which is 13%

Q: *Are these sanctions the right ones to apply to schools that fail to meet the requirements?*

Key points for response:

Yes but those responsible must have the authority to implement them and for the process to be transparent. It could make admissions highly competitive and selective.

Page 27 – Selective Schools – Proposals to Reform

Q: *If not, what other sanctions might be effective in ensuring selective schools contribute to the number of good non-selective places locally?*

Key points for response:

Provide a collaborative role for local authorities to ensure selective and non-selective schools work in partnership

- Q: *How can we best ensure that new and expanding selective schools and existing non-selective schools becoming selective are located in the areas that need good school places the most?*

Key points for response:

By working with local authorities. It has to be based on participation need and/or quality deficiencies.

Page 28 – Selective Schools – Existing Schools

- Q: *How can we best ensure that the benefits of existing selective schools are brought to bear on local non-selective schools?*

Key points for response:

By relying on the knowledge and expertise of local authorities who understand the local landscape

- Q: *Are there other things we should ask of existing selective schools to ensure they support non-selective education in their areas?*

Key points for response:

They should provide a yearly evaluation and monitoring report of performance and activity.

- Q: *Should the conditions we intend to apply to new or expanding selective schools also apply to existing selective schools?*

Key points for response:

Yes

Page 33 – Faith Schools – Proposal for Reform

- Q: *Are these the right alternative requirements to replace the 50% rule?*

Key points for response:

Yes

- Q: *How else might we ensure that faith schools espouse and deliver a diverse, multi-faith offer to parents within a faith school environment?*

Key points for response:

Legislate to deliver a national core RE offer in which all locally syllabi are to be based

Page 34 – Faith Schools – Proposal for Reform

Q: *Are there other ways in which we can effectively monitor faith schools for integration and hold them to account for performance?*

Key points for response:

Report on the share of core faith on roll in school performance tables

Q: *Are there other sanctions we could apply to faith schools that do not meet this requirement?*

Key points for response:

Many attend faith schools with the belief that it will be character building, develop resilience and understanding and enhance compassion for others in a supportive and effective learning environment.

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